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Atari Online News, Etc.  
A-ONE Online Magazine  
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->From the Editor's Keyboard  
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

Last week's snow is, for the most part, gone - thankfully. One last cruel reminder of winter, perhaps? The temperatures are rising slowly - perhaps a positive sign of things to come. I certainly hope so, as I'm definitely ready for the spring season!

There are a number of obvious "targets" for this week's editorial. I could go on about European Union's decision to find Microsoft guilty of antitrust laws - something that the U.S. didn't have the cajones to do. We'll see what impact this happens on the software giant. I could also reiterate the vast stupidity of people, falling for such scam tactics as "phishing". But, since we're all Atari users, past and present, I know that you're all too smart to fall for things like that. Just do your non-Atari friends a favor, and explain to them how not to be stupid and fall for these schemes. I could also go on (and on!) about spam, but for now, what's the point? I know I'll be back to that topic sooner or later.

So, what I thought I'd briefly do is a little reminiscing about things Atari. For a lot of us old-timers, attending an AtariFest was something that was kind of a highlight during our Atari-using experience. I'm not talking about a local swap meet, but a major Atari show in which we got to do some traveling, stay at a hotel, and mingle with hundreds of Atari users and developers for a weekend.

During my Atari heyday, I managed to attend at least a half dozen shows, including three WAACE shows, couple of Connecticut fests, as well as a major AtariFest that I helped to put on in Boston. There was nothing like these shows - ever. I've heard enough about MacWorld, that corporate-sponsored ballyhoo. These aren't put on by everyday users, but major corporations out to make a lot of big bucks. PC shows? I've really haven't heard of any, but I would imagine that they'd be no different.

AtariFests were in a class all by themselves. For the most part, these shows were put on by the users, for the users. Shows like WAACE, the Glendale show, World of Atari, Connecticut, Philadelphia, and Boston were all put together by banded Atari user groups. Developers and dealers were rounded up to attend, and usually with folks from Atari itself, and a terrific weekend of events were planned and carried out in terrific manner. These events are something that I will always remember fondly.

I remember my first WAACE show, the year after they moved from the school to the Reston Sheraton hotel. A bunch of us drove the eight hours or so down to Virginia, starting after midnight to make it in time for the terrific

hotel breakfast buffet! We'd eat, get in a few hours sleep, and then start to mingle with people who w probably only met before on Delphi, GENie, Compuserve, or one of the many bulletin boards that we somehow were able to afford to call. Or, we knew the names from reading the various Atari magazines of the day.

What a thrill it was to be able to meet the likes of the CodeHeads - John Eidsvoog and Charles Johnson. The Gribnif guys - Rick Flashman and Dan Wilga. Dave Small. Jim Allen. Clay Walnum. Nathan Potechin. And the countless others. And the people who put out our favorite magazines, like Current Notes, Atari Explorer, ST-Log, Analog, and the rest. And the online services, represented by such notables as Ron Luks, Charlie Bachand, and Darlah Pine (Potechin). And of course, those from Atari that would show up, like Jack Tramiel, Sam Tramiel, Bob Brodie, and others. These events reminded me of an Atari version of Woodstock, only smaller. Instead of terrific rock and roll, we had Atari. Those were the gold ol' days!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING  
compiled by Joe Mirando  
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I'll warn you right at the start... short column this week. The messages in the NewsGroup have picked up a bit, but I find myself terribly under the gun. Tomorrow I'll be undergoing one of the worst things known to man... an ISO audit.

I won't bore you with the details, but it's kind of like dentistry before the invention of anesthetic. So I'll be kind of breezing through the messages from the UseNet and picking the ones that I find more interesting so that I can get to the mound of paperwork that I've left un-done until now.

So without wasting any more time, let's get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup  
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Claude Bourgoïn asks about the Falcon's keyboard:

"I was wondering if anyone out there has had a problem with the Falcon Keyboard, especially with the space bar. All the keys on the Falcon work fine except the spacebar. When I press the spacebar I do not get any response from the falcon. For example, when I am typing in QED and press the spacebar the cursor doesn't move."

David Bolt tells Claude:

"It's possible that something has managed to get inside the rubber cup under the space bar and is not allowing an electrical connection when you press on it. Unfortunately, if this is the cause of the problem, the only cure I know of is to strip down the keyboard[0] and clean the dirt from the rubber cup and/or on the keyboard circuit board.

Just a few things to make a note of:

there is space for 2 cups under the return key, although only one is used, so don't think you've a missing cup just because the holder is empty;

when disassembling, sometimes the cups will stick to the circuit board and then fall off just after it's removed so take care to watch for them falling;

when re-assembling, I found that by balancing the keyboard face down between a couple of books, all the cups remained in their holders, and it allowed me to easily realign the LEDs.

[0] After stripping several ST keyboards[1], which appear to be identical to the Falcon keyboards, this isn't something I look forward to having to do.

[1] Usually to fix broken mouse/joystick ports[2].

[2] Whoever decided to put the mouse and joystick ports there still needs to be shot."

Claude tells David:

"I tried your suggestion of checking the suction cups, I cleaned all the cups and cleaned off the circuit board now all the keys are working."

Derryck Croker adds this tip for Claude:

"It's well worth while touching up those joints with a soldering iron and some solder 'just in case'!"

John Garone asks about formatting a new drive for the Falcon:

"Reformatting a Hawk 4gig drive on a Falcon, is it normal for my system to take an hour to react to HDDriver (8.04)? The hard drive light stayed on steady during that time. After that, a sector test was performed and the drive light flashed until done. Partitioning went ok!"

Dr. Uwe Seimet, author of HD Driver tells John:

"Yes, some drives can take that long, or even longer. That's why formatting a drive can be a waste of time, as long as it does not have bad sectors."

Peter Slegg asks for help with a misbehaving program:

"I seem to have done something that has broken Arcview.

I am still able to open and list the files in a Zip but it is not possible to extract or view any of the contents. It just reports this error:

```
Error -34 while Dsetpath(\tmp\ARCVIEW.TMP\)
```

and bleeps.

On my G partition there is a /tmp folder and inside that there is an ARCVIEW.TMP folder when arcview is running. I am using Arcview 0.82

Any ideas ? "

Derryck Croker tells Peter that it...

"Sounds like you've broken something - have you got something like this in your env variables?

```
#_ENV TEMP=L:\ArcViewTemp\
```

I suppose I could have left the folder name out, ArcView would then have created its ARCVIEW.TMP folder in the main directory.

The temp folder is needed for ArcView to extract to even if viewing a file.

Latest ArcView version is 0.83, by the way."

Peter tells Derryck:

"Well I've got the normal tmp directory stuff in mint.cnf:

```
setenv TMP u:\tmp
setenv TEMP u:\tmp
setenv TMPDIR u:\tmp
```

but that hasn't changed in ages.

I seem to remember this error popping up now and again when using Arcview but it never seemed to make any difference. I must have changed something but I am struggling to work out what it is at the moment."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Wish me luck with that audit... of course, by the time you read this, the audit will be over with and I'll have finished the better part of a bottle of scotch.... for medicinal purposes only, of course.

Until next time, keep your ears open so that you'll hear what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

[illegible]

->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

"Pitfall" was one of the great games of the early computer age.

Activision has now released the latest game in the franchise - "Pitfall: The Lost Expedition" for Xbox, GameCube and PlayStation 2. What a difference 22 years makes.

This game is just as addictive as the original, and there's even a plot of sorts.

Naturally, a contrived plot device - which I like to refer to as "a very bad thing" - occurs. In this case, a storm breaks out. One of the engines is disabled. The plane dives toward the thick jungle growth. Death looms.

Harry then unceremoniously pushes her out of the plane - apparently so fast it wasn't clear whether she had time to put on the chute.

Needless to say, Harry - even sans chute - survives, miraculously waking up in a grassy clearing. He has not a scratch, bruise, or broken bone. But there will be plenty of opportunity for that later.

The first obstacle: a huge circular pit that opens and closes like a mouth. In fact, it IS a mouth. If Harry falls into it, it will chew on him for a few seconds and - if he has any lives left - spit him out. Who knew a cartoon explorer would taste so bad?

If a crocodile chomps down on him, the player can get free by rapidly wiggling the thumbstick on the game controller. Harry then tries prying open the beast's jaws until it flips him up in the air and sends him flying.

Harry eventually has to round up all the crash survivors, a job that takes him deep into scorpion-infested caves, across snowy mountains, and through ancient ruins, where plenty of booby traps await.

The original game had the equivalent of 255 screens and gave you 20 minutes to retrieve 32 treasures. This game allows players plenty of time to explore.

The graphics are wonderful - as good, if not better, than any Lara Croft or Indiana Jones exploration game. Harry has complete freedom of movement and players can swing the camera around to look for the next vine to grab, or try to figure out where the next enemy might appear. There are times, however, when the scenery and camera angle work together to block your view.

A few elements of the game were bothersome. On my PlayStation 2, the non-interactive movies sometimes ended prematurely and I had to play the Xbox version to see what I missed.

When loading a saved game, you find yourself at the last checkpoint, not where you actually saved it.

And the characterization of the natives, who scurry around comically whenever Harry comes into view, invokes stereotypes straight out of the old-time jungle movies, with dialogue at the "unga bunga" level of sophistication.

If you can forgive the cultural insensitivity in a game that's clearly designed to be lighthearted fun, "Pitfall: The Lost Expedition" is a great find.

Available for \$40, it's rated for everyone. There's also a GameBoy Advance version for \$30, but it looks more like the 1982 version.

Crash Bandicoot Teams Up With Nemesis Dr. Cortex to Defeat  
Evil Twins in the Marsupial's Funniest Adventure Yet

Best-Selling Video Game Franchise Introduces Innovative Dual  
Gameplay Mechanic and Hilarious Storyline in New Action Platformer  
for PlayStation2 and Xbox

The irrepressible Crash Bandicoot has returned in his funniest adventure

yet! Vivendi Universal Games announced Crash Twinsanity, the next installment in the best-selling video game franchise, set to ship in Q3 2004 for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system and the Xbox video game system from Microsoft. Developed by Traveller's Tales, the new action platformer reveals a hilarious storyline that showcases the creative input of award-winning animation filmmaker Jordan Reichek of Perky Pickle Studios and introduces innovative features, including the ingenious pairing of Crash with his longtime nemesis Dr. Cortex in an unprecedented new dual gameplay mechanic.

"Crash Twinsanity reinvigorates the 3D action platform genre by combining the well-known humor and wacky situations that Crash is known for with cutting edge, inventive gameplay elements that will make this game the most robust and funniest Crash experience ever," said Luc Vanhal, President and COO, North America for VU Games.

A new adversary - The Evil Twins - has invaded Crash's island paradise with plans of destruction. In a strange twist, Crash grudgingly pairs with his archenemy, Dr. Cortex in order to save the world. Through this unorthodox partnership, Cortex is abused as Crash's favorite weapon when Crash and Cortex are controlled as one. Additionally, this dynamic paired gameplay will include never-before-seen mechanics which also include cooperative level designs in which Crash must protect Cortex and vice-versa, albeit reluctantly!

Gamers will encounter complex and highly reactive enemies that will detect and hunt Crash, run away when outgunned and interact with other foes to either form alliances or settle differences. The game features completely immersive environments which respond realistically as the player interacts with them, along with streaming worlds that can be played through without load times; and four playable characters - Crash, Cortex, Nina Cortex (the niece of the evil doctor) and the brand new pairing of Crash and Cortex.

The Crash Bandicoot franchise made its debut in 1996 and has sold more than 30 million copies worldwide.

#### Microsoft Rolls Out Game Development Software

Microsoft Corp., looking to leverage its expertise in software as it tries to catch up to competitors in the video game industry, on Wednesday introduced a new platform to be used in building games for its Xbox console.

At the Game Developers Conference, Microsoft unveiled XNA, a new system that it said will underpin games for future versions of the Xbox, as well as for the Windows and Windows Mobile operating systems.

Microsoft, a distant second place in the console market behind Sony Corp., said much of the goal behind XNA will be standardization, and it will make some Xbox technologies available to Windows developers for integration into PC games.

Among the features that will be ported over are the development kit for the Xbox Live online gaming service and an audio authoring tool. Microsoft also said it would create a unified controller standard so that control pads and inputs would be alike across both Xbox and PC games.



Certain graphics technologies used in Windows would also come to the Xbox, Microsoft said. The Xbox is more like a PC than its competitors, using relatively standard storage and processing components.

The company recently installed a permanent head for its game studios, which has put out few hits on the Xbox but has a longer history with PC games. It also moved to unify its content development and marketing management.

#### Analyst Sees Microsoft Xbox Price Cut on Tuesday

Piper Jaffray on Friday predicted that Microsoft Corp. would cut the price of its Xbox video game console to \$149 next Tuesday, a move which it suggested would spur sales in the short-term.

In a research note, Piper Jaffray analyst Tony Gikas said he expected the price cut to take effect at stores as of Tuesday morning.

"We estimate that Xbox unit sales will increase by (4 to 5 times) during the 6 to 8 weeks following the price cut compared to the 6 to 8 week period prior to the price cut (then fall-off)," Gikas said.

A price cut on both the Xbox and the market-leading PlayStation 2 from Sony Corp. has been widely expected, with most game publishers and retailers forecasting the move no later than mid-May, the start of the gaming trade show E3.

"We think the \$149 price point is a risky undertaking that will limit unit sales without additional promotions or killer-applications to drive interest," Gikas said. "We doubt a \$149 price point will be enough to drive (calendar 2004) hardware unit sales above 2003 levels."

Microsoft executives have consistently declined to talk about pricing on their hardware, including this week at the Game Developers Conference in San Jose, an industry gathering where some had speculated the price move would be announced.

#### Sun Micro Shows Off New System for Gaming Servers

Sun Microsystems Inc. on Sunday said it would demonstrate a prototype system to allow video game publishers to use a single computer server to run online games for both PCs and consoles, cutting the ongoing cost of supporting those games.

Sun also announced a contest for independent game developers building games in Sun's Java programming language.

Sun has pushed into gaming in recent years, tapping the growth in the \$20 billion-plus international market, most notably in the wireless environment, where its Java-based J2ME platform has been popular for games.

The server prototype is set to be exhibited at this week's Game Developers Conference in San Jose, California.

"We will be able to bring multiple games online using the same exact stack

of hardware," Chris Melissinos, Sun's chief gaming officer, told Reuters ahead of the show.

The server prototype, designed by the company's Game Technology Group, uses Sun hardware and software and would allow publishers, Melissinos said, to run games from both consoles and PCs on the same platform.

He declined to say when the technology might be commercially available.

The contest is designed to showcase Java game development and includes prizes like a \$40,000 development kit, computers and personal digital assistants.

Sun said the winners would be announced during the JavaOne conference in San Francisco this summer.

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

European Union Fines Microsoft \$613 Million

The European Union slapped Microsoft Corp. with a \$613 million fine Wednesday for abusively wielding its Windows software monopoly and ordered sanctions that go well beyond the U.S. antitrust settlement - setting up what could be another lengthy court battle.

Microsoft called the EU's decision "unwarranted and ill-considered," and said it expected to ask a judge to suspend the order pending appeal.

The EU antitrust office said it sought to alter Microsoft's behavior because its five-year investigation found that the software giant tried to squeeze competitors out of Windows-related markets and "the illegal behavior is still ongoing."

It gave the company 90 days to offer European computer manufacturers a version of Windows stripped of the company's digital media player, software for viewing video and listening to music that is expected to become pivotal in the industry as multimedia content becomes more pervasive.

The EU also gave Microsoft 120 days to release "complete and accurate" information to rivals in the office server market so their products can work more smoothly with desktop computers running Windows.

"Microsoft has abused its virtual monopoly power over the PC desktop in Europe," EU antitrust chief Mario Monti said. "We are simply ensuring that anyone who develops new software has a fair opportunity to compete in the marketplace."

Monti said he limited the order to Europe in deference to regulators in the United States and other countries, but that doing so "will not unduly

undermine the effectiveness," given the size of the European market. Microsoft, which had \$32 billion in revenue last year, does about 20 percent of its business in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Microsoft's general counsel, Brad Smith, said he would most likely ask the presiding judge at the European Court of First Instance to stay the order pending appeal - a process that can take years.

"The European Commission has the first word, but the European courts have the final word," he said.

Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates, announcing a new speech server product in San Francisco on Wednesday, did not mention the EU case.

The U.S. Justice Department said the decision could hamper innovation and harm consumers.

The fine would automatically be suspended upon appeal, but antitrust experts were divided on the company's chances for winning emergency relief from the rest of the order.

"It will be up to Microsoft to show that this prohibition causes irreparable harm, which is not an easy thing to do," said Jacques Bourgeois, a former commission legal adviser now in private practice.

Others noted, however, that the commission would have to show that further delay could result in irreparable harm to competitors, such as the danger they could go out of business. And the court has shown sympathy to arguments about threats to intellectual property rights.

"If it's later ruled that the commission was wrong" to make Microsoft disclose information to rivals, "how do they put the genie back into the bottle?" said Stephen Kinsella, an international business expert with the Herbert Smith law firm in Brussels.

Monti called the ruling "proportionate" and "balanced," noting that "dominant companies have a special responsibility to ensure that the way they do business doesn't prevent competition."

He said the decision should set a "framework" for resolving similar complaints already pending against Microsoft's latest operating system, Windows XP.

"Maybe fewer cases will materialize because of the clarity which we hope to bring forward with this decision," he said.

Settlement talks broke down last week over the EU's insistence on just such a precedent-setting element: preventing Microsoft from adding features such as Google-like search to future versions of Windows.

Smith argued that Microsoft's settlement proposal, which he said included an offer to release a worldwide Windows version that included three competing media players besides its own, would have been more useful to consumers than the penalties.

He called the order to produce a version of Windows without media software an "unwarranted and ill-considered" violation of intellectual property rights under World Trade Organization rules.

Doing so, he said, would be difficult and make other features and even some

Web sites work less effectively.

The company made similar claims in the U.S. case, which surrounded Microsoft's inclusion of its Internet Explorer Web browser in Windows.

Microsoft was also found guilty of monopolistic behavior in the U.S. case, but the EU order strikes deeper, at the heart of Microsoft's business strategy - regularly adding new features to Windows to help sell upgrades.

The Redmond, Wash.-based company argues that such "bundling" benefits consumers. Rivals call it unfair competition, given that Windows runs more than 90 percent of personal computers worldwide.

The EU said it was concerned that a stranglehold on media players could let Microsoft dictate future standards for how digital music and video files are encoded, distributed and played.

Under the EU order, Microsoft can continue selling a version of Windows with its media player software installed but must not make the stripped-down version less attractive or a poorer performer.

The ruling could boost other makers of media software, led by RealNetworks Inc. and Apple Computer Inc. Bob Kimball, RealNetworks' general counsel, said the EU decision "confirms the merit" of his company's private antitrust lawsuit against Microsoft.

The EU case also involved low-end servers that tie desktop computers together in offices. Sun Microsystems Inc. complained to the EU in 1998 that Microsoft refused to provide details needed for Sun programs to "talk" to Windows computers as efficiently as Microsoft's own server software could.

The Commission called Microsoft's refusal to disclose interface information "part of a broader strategy designed to shut competitors out of the market."

Microsoft could get "reasonable remuneration" for disclosing its proprietary code, the ruling said, adding that the Windows source code itself would remain untouched.

The EU said it would appoint a trustee to monitor Microsoft's compliance with the ruling. The expert is to be selected from at least three names submitted by Microsoft, but the company would have to demonstrate the independence of its nominees. The trustee would have access to Microsoft sites, employees and documents.

The EU described the decision in a three-page statement. The ruling itself may not be released for weeks, as Microsoft may ask that business secrets be redacted.

### Phishing for Identity Information

Phishing - a relatively new obsession among Internet scammers - employs e-mail lures to "fish" for identity information, such as passwords and financial data. It has become more prevalent, and more dangerous, since EarthLink first warned Web users about theft e-mail scams in July, 2003.

Armed with their "phished" information, scammers commit identity theft and fraud, explains Dan Meyer, director of communications for the Anti-Phishing Working Group and director of product marketing at Tumbleweed, a corporate anti-spam vendor.

The Anti-Phishing Working Group, an association of financial institutions, online retailers, ISPs, the law-enforcement community and vendors, reported 282 unique phishing attacks in February - a 60 percent increase over the number of attacks reported in January.

"We've seen a pretty significant growth trend over a number of months, and there is nothing that is going to change that in the near future," says Meyer.

It is no wonder phishing is growing. It is one of the most economical fraud schemes possible; it entails low risk of getting caught; and it offers a very high reward, according to Naftali Bennet, CEO of Cyota, an anti-fraud and security software provider.

Quantity is not the only changing variable. The quality of the phishing is improving, says Bennet. Today's phishing attacks look professional, unlike the attacks of less than a year ago, which did not include graphics and often contained spelling and grammar errors. "Today's phishing attacks mimic the actual Web sites."

It is the authenticity of the e-mail and the ability of the phisher to convince the user to open it that enables a successful phishing expedition. "We see many types of phish attacks: They can be e-mails that blatantly ask for a login or password from a well-known e-tailer or financial institution end-user," says Rami Habel, senior product manager, Proofpoint. "They can also be more disguised messages that do not have a username/password request, but have a call to action - and it is in this call to action that phishers trick end-users."

The February "winner" for the most phishing attacks is eBay, with the Anti-Phishing Group listing 104 unique attacks. Citibank had the next highest number of unique attacks with 58, followed by PayPal, with 42. The industry most targeted by phishers continues to be financial services, both in the number of attacks and the number of organizations assailed.

"It's where the money is," quips Meyer.

Phish attacks started out as e-tailer spoofs - such as a fake eBay seller e-mail - but they have evolved to include financial-institution and ISP fraud, explained Habel. Furthermore, some sophisticated phishers now are emulating a company's e-mail correspondence with its own employees.

Phishing is a federal criminal offense, and depending on the actual abuses, can land the offender in prison for up to 30 years.

"It looks more and more like professionals are getting involved in phishing. This started out as small time, but it's looking much more like organized crime is involved, both domestically and internationally," Meyer said. Among the international hot spots are Russia and South Korea.

Because it is cheap and easy, small-time operators always will be involved, believes Bennet, who notes that an amateur can set up a phishing operation in about 12 hours. While there are other troublesome technologies on the horizon, expect phishing to continue to grow.

## U.S. Shuts Down Internet 'Phishing' Scam

The U.S. government said on Monday it had arrested a Texas man who crafted fake e-mail messages to trick hundreds of Internet users into providing credit card numbers and other sensitive information.

Zachary Hill of Houston pleaded guilty to charges related to a "phishing" operation, in which he sent false emails purportedly from online businesses to collect sensitive personal information from consumers, the Federal Trade Commission said.

According to the FTC, Hill sent out official-looking e-mail notices warning America Online and Paypal users to update their accounts to avoid cancellation.

Those who clicked on a link in the message were directed to a Web site Hill set up that asked for Social Security numbers, mothers' maiden names, bank account numbers and other sensitive information, the FTC said.

Phishing has emerged as a favorite tool of identity thieves over the past several years and experts say it is a serious threat to consumers.

Hill used the information he collected to set up credit-card accounts and change information on existing accounts, the FTC said. He duped 400 users out of at least \$75,000 before his operation was shut down on Dec. 4, FTC attorneys said.

Hill will be sentenced on May 17, according to court documents.

A lawyer for Hill was not immediately available for comment.

Scam artists have posed as banks, online businesses and even the U.S. government to gather personal information, setting up Web pages that closely mirror official sites.

FTC officials said consumers should never respond to an e-mail asking for sensitive information by clicking on a link in the message. "If you think the company needs your financial information, it's best to contact them directly," FTC attorney Lisa Hone said.

Those who believe they may be victims of identity theft should visit (<http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft>), she said.

## AOL Blocks Spammers' Web Sites

America Online Inc. has adopted a new tactic against spam: blocking its members' ability to see Web sites promoted by bulk e-mailers.

The policy, which began earlier this year, opens a new front in the war on spam but also makes the Dulles company the first of its kind to push past the traditional Internet orthodoxy that service providers should be neutral conduits to anything the World Wide Web has to offer.

Many spammers advertise products - including body-enhancement pills,

pirated software and get-rich-quick schemes - by including links in their e-mail to Internet sites that display the wares and process orders. AOL members attempting to visit a blocked Web page receive an error message that says a connection to the page could not be made, but are not told that it is a spammer's site that has been placed off limits. No other notification of the policy is provided.

"Essentially, we have vastly improved AOL's ability to restrict identified spammers' sites from being accessed by our members online," said company spokesman Nicholas J. Graham. He said AOL is choosing which sites to block based on complaints from its members, who can report spam that they receive to the company.

Graham said the Web site blocking policy has contributed to, for the first time, a reduction in the amount of bulk mail that spammers are trying to send to its members.

The move highlights the fact that Internet providers have the ability to block users from seeing certain content. Indeed, in trying to short-circuit the income stream of spammers, AOL is attacking one of the most vexing truths about the spam problem: Some people want and buy the products, which helps keeps the spammers in business.

"There is a service to AOL members by doing this," said Paul M. Smith, a Washington lawyer who specializes in Internet and media law. "But there's some trade-off...because some people want to go to those sites. It shows that there can be in the world of the Internet some serious issues raised by a small number of companies that [control] bottlenecks to the flow of information."

Although AOL has joined hands with Internet service competitors EarthLink Inc., Microsoft Corp. and Yahoo Inc. to sue spammers and to develop new technologies for blocking spam, AOL is alone in its move to try to cut off access to commerce Web sites advertised via spam.

EarthLink spokeswoman Carla Shaw said her service has begun to block Web sites that are linked from spam that purports to be from EarthLink. In a scam known as phishing, the e-mail directs users to sites that look like they are EarthLink's and asks for personal data. AOL has blocked phishing sites for about a year.

Neither Microsoft nor Yahoo block access to Web sites for their e-mail account holders.

Legal experts said there is nothing in the AOL strategy that violates free-speech laws. And Internet service providers (ISPs) have long provided parents the ability to block content from their children.

"The model of the Internet always came with some substantial latitude for the ISP to pick and choose," said James X. Dempsey, executive director of the Center for Democracy and Technology, a public interest group. "What we're talking about is a byproduct of the strain spam is placing on the Internet. There's no doubt that spam is forcing ISPs and others to some extreme measures."

But Cindy Cohn, legal director of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, said AOL's intentions are good, but blocking Web sites is "paternalistic." She said she worries that system could be abused by someone seeking to block a rival's Web site by spamming AOL members with that link.

Graham said AOL abides by a Pennsylvania law that requires ISPs to block access to child-pornography sites. That law is being challenged by civil liberties groups because the list of blocked sites is determined by the state attorney general's office. Government deciding what people can see or read violates the First Amendment, these groups say.

Graham said that the combination of improved filtering, stepped-up legal actions and the Web site blocking could be turning spammers away from AOL, whose members have been a prime spam target. According to AOL's numbers on Feb. 20, 2.6 billion pieces of spam were sent to AOL accounts. On March 17, the number was 1.9 billion.

Statistics from other Internet providers, e-mail security companies and market research firms show that overall spam traffic has held steady for the past several months at about 60 percent of all e-mail traffic.

### 'Witty' Worm Wallops Thousands of Computers

A quickly spreading e-mail worm that emerged over the weekend damaged computers at several universities and at least one Web hosting company, according to the first wave of damage reports that began surfacing on Monday as system administrators returned to work.

The so-called "Witty" worm spread rapidly throughout the Internet early Saturday morning, infecting as many as 30,000 computers before subsiding, said Johannes Ullrich, chief technology officer for the SANS Internet Storm Center.

The worm disrupted service for thousands of customers of Webhosting.net, a Miami-based Web hosting company. Andrew Martin, the company's chief information officer, said the worm completely destroyed four of the company's Windows servers, shuttering more than 1,000 Web sites for most of the weekend. The company is in the process of bringing customers back online.

"Those computers were pretty much hosed," Martin said. "Luckily we were able to retrieve the data that was on them from backup servers, but the infected computers had to be rebuilt from scratch."

The worm targeted computers running one of two firewall software programs in conjunction with Microsoft's Windows operating system, taking advantage of a security flaw in the firewall applications that was uncovered earlier this month. Once it infects a computer, it destroys files and often makes it impossible for people to restart their computers. It also tries to use the computer to look for new infection targets, but as the number of affected computers shut down, the worm's spread subsided.

Unlike many recent worms that arrive as e-mail attachments, the Witty worm migrates without any action on the part of the user. It gets the name "Witty" from a line of code in the worm that says, "insert witty message here."

The worm does its work without creating new files on infected PCs, so few antivirus products would have detected it, Ullrich said.

It also writes random data onto the computer hard drives, often causing them to fail. The worm can overwrite most data on the hard drive within



about 20 minutes. Technologically sophisticated computer users could recover that data, but most users would have to go through the complicated process of reinstalling the operating system. In some cases, the worm can damage computers beyond all repair.

The firewalls were developed by Atlanta-based Internet Security Systems Inc., which estimated that 16,000 computers were infected during the weekend.

Chris Rouland, vice president of ISS's X-Force research and development division, said the number could have been higher if the worm struck during the work week when most vulnerable computers were turned on.

Scott Fendley, an IT security analyst for the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, lost much of the work he had done on his master's thesis after the Witty worm took down his computer on Saturday.

The worm did not take down the university's critical computers, but Fendley said that the school was considering whether to buy a university-wide license for Black Ice.

"I have a feeling that we will reconsider what our options are for enterprise firewall software," he said. "It's more than a little ironic that this comes from a security firm that makes much of its money from discovering security flaws in other people's software."

The worm also hit the University of Michigan, infecting 75 Web and e-mail servers. Traffic generated by the worm trying to infect other systems quickly brought e-mail and Web traffic to a halt on the school's network for the bulk of the day.

Jim Daniels, a network administrator for the University of Michigan, said the school is in the process of rebuilding the servers.

"When they tried to reboot these machines, we learned they were pretty much finished off," Daniels said. "I don't think anyone has been able to restore one without completely rebuilding it."

No suspect has been identified in Saturday's attack. Rouland of ISS said that the company contacted the FBI. The FBI is aware of the situation but a spokesman declined to say whether it is investigating.

Security vulnerability research firm eEye Digital Security identified the flaw on March 8. The Aliso Viejo, Calif.-based company discovered that it could trick some versions of Black Ice and Real Secure into processing Internet traffic that would allow attackers to transfer dangerous data to vulnerable computers.

ISS made a patch available for its corporate customers shortly after the eEye announcement, but did not provide a fix for its vulnerable desktop PC versions until Friday afternoon.

Initial copies of the worm appear to have been "seeded" - or initially released from at least 100 computers that the attackers had taken over, said Colleen Shannon, a senior security researcher for the Cooperative Association for Internet Data Analysis (CAIDA).

CAIDA monitors Internet traffic trends from its location at the San Diego Supercomputing Center at the University of California, San Diego.

## New Spawn of Bagle Worm Unleashed

Yet another version of the Bagle worm is on the loose and is already causing trouble in parts of Europe. Bagle.U appeared early Friday morning and has begun spreading quickly, even though it contains none of the social engineering tricks that Bagle's author has used to help previous versions succeed.

This variant arrives in an e-mail with a blank subject line and no body text. The sending address, as always, is spoofed, and the name of the infected executable attachment is completely random. After execution, the worm mails itself to all of the addresses in the infected machine's address book.

Bagle.U does include a backdoor component that listens on TCP port 4751 and connects to a Web server in a German domain, [www.werde.de](http://www.werde.de), according to an analysis by the McAfee Security unit of Network Associates Inc., based in Santa Clara, Calif. Once it establishes a connection with the remote server, the worm generates a unique ID number for each specific infected machine and sends that number and the number of the port on which it is listening to the server.

The worm also is capable of downloading an updated copy of itself from the remote server or downloading a batch file that removes the worm from the infected PC.

Once resident on the system, Bagle.U will sometimes open the Hearts card game that is included with some versions of Windows. In other cases it will drop a file named Gigabit.exe into the Windows system folder. This file contains a copy of the worm.

Bagle.U is set to expire on Jan. 1, 2005. Officials at McAfee said they had seen about 100 copies of Bagle.U as of early Friday morning and expected many more as the day wears on.

This is the 21st variant of Bagle to appear on the Internet since the original Bagle worm showed up on Jan. 18.

## SCO Goes to Washington

The SCO Group is targeting the U.S. government with legal threats over its use of the Linux operating system. Using the Freedom of Information Act, a Virginia attorney unearthed letters written by SCO to two agencies of the Department of Energy.

SCO's letters, which surfaced last week, were aimed at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and the National Energy Research Scientific Computing Center. Those agencies both use supercomputers that run on Linux. The Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory is awaiting the completed installation the world's fastest computer, IBM's Linux-based Blue Gene/L.

SCO earlier had contacted the NERSC, informing the agency that the use of Linux infringed on its Unix patents. On January 16th, SCO's regional director of intellectual-property licensing, Gregory Pettit, issued an

aggressive plea, written partly in the upper case:

"If you fail to respond to our efforts to pursue a licensing arrangement, WE WILL TURN YOUR NAME OVER TO OUR OUTSIDE COUNSEL FOR CONSIDERATION OF LEGAL ACTION."

Mark Koehn, a Virginia-based intellectual-property lawyer of the firm Shaw Pittman, obtained the letters under the Freedom of Information Act. "I networked through a contact who knew of the letters, so I requested those from the Department of Justice," Koehn told NewsFactor. "These letters are samples, and my sense is that there have been more sent to other government agencies," he said.

Just how the federal government will respond to legal threats over Linux is pure conjecture, at this point. Will it defend the use of Linux by federal agencies? Some observers, such as Will Rodger, director of public policy with the Open Source and Industry Alliance, say the government likely will do nothing until litigation actually occurs.

"There are all sorts of reasons why the government doesn't need to worry about this," Rodger told NewsFactor. "The government has to allow itself to be sued, so people in civilian agencies shouldn't be terribly worried about it," he said.

SCO certainly has able bodies in its pool of attorneys, namely the former Department of Justice star lawyer who helped spearhead the government's successful antitrust case against Microsoft, David Boies. But Rodger says that knowledge of the inner workings of the DoJ will not add much to SCO's argument. "It's a meritless case," he added.

"I have a hard time ... believing that even David Boies himself, with the combined might of his firm and the funders of SCO, would be able to defeat the Department of Justice in court," Rodger noted.

But litigation may not be in SCO's best interest. As seen in the proposed merger of Oracle and PeopleSoft, the DoJ objected to the pairing on antitrust grounds. But a number of analysts privately say the tipping point had nothing to do with antitrust. Many federal and state agencies rely on PeopleSoft products, so regulators were not about to allow the possibility of losing vendor support because the software changed owners.

Similarly, Linux is becoming an important piece of computing in government centers, especially because applications makers can supply lower cost alternatives that run on open-source software. How likely is it that the government simply would return to a non-Linux world? "I'm curious to see how the DoJ will react," said attorney Mark Koehn.

Back in January, SCO's CEO sent letters to members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to inform them of the dangers of open-source. In language reminiscent of the cold war, Darl McBride tells lawmakers that the use of open-source software is essentially unpatriotic, anti-capitalist and, in terms of security, risky. He warns that a dictator could build a supercomputer with information available through the open-source movement.

"All these claims are ludicrous. They're using alarmist language, because they essentially have no case," argues Rodger. "In open source, you have a phenomenon now that has penetrated essentially all of the global 2000," he noted.

Rodger argues that open source is a development and licensing methodology

that is an integral part of the business plans of major I.T. companies, such as IBM and Oracle. The Linux genie is not going back in the bottle.

### Recording Industry Sues 532 Over Swapping

The recording industry sued 532 people Tuesday, including scores of individuals using computer networks at 21 universities, claiming they were illegally sharing digital music files over the Internet.

The latest wave of copyright lawsuits brought by the Recording Industry Association of America on behalf of recording companies marks the first time the trade group has targeted computer users swapping music files over university networks.

The RIAA filed the "John Doe" complaints against 89 individuals using networks at universities in Arizona, California, New York, Indiana, Maryland, Colorado, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Wisconsin and Washington. Lawsuits were also filed against 443 people using commercial Internet access providers in California, Colorado, Missouri, Texas and Virginia.

The recording group did not name which Internet access providers the defendants were using.

With the "John Doe" lawsuits, the recording industry must work through the courts to find out the identities of the defendants, which at the outset are identified only by the numeric Internet protocol addresses assigned to computers online.

The defendants, which the trade group claims offered "substantial amounts" of music files, face potential civil penalties or settlements that could cost them thousands of dollars. Settlements in previous cases have averaged \$3,000 each.

"We are sending a clear message that downloading or 'sharing' music from a peer-to-peer network without authorization is illegal, it can have consequences and it undermines the creative future of music itself," RIAA president Cary Sherman said.

Including Tuesday's filings, the recording industry has sued 1,977 people since launching its legal assault against online music piracy last fall, and has reached out-of-court settlements in around 400 of the cases.

### Senators Struggle to Define Computer 'Spyware'

Computer "spyware" is noxious and harmful and must be stopped as soon as people can figure out exactly what it is, members of a Senate subcommittee said on Tuesday.

Programs that secretly track computer users' activities are becoming an online scourge rivaling "spam" e-mail and should be outlawed before they prompt consumers to abandon the Internet, members of the Senate communications subcommittee said.

But a bill sponsored by committee members will need to define the problem

precisely to avoid outlawing pop-up ads and other annoying but essentially harmless technologies, consumer and business advocates said.

"We really have to spend a little time, take a deep breath and define what we're after here," said Jerry Berman, president of the Center for Democracy and Technology, a consumer-advocacy group.

Like the congressional debate about "spam" e-mail last year, much rests on the definition of what constitutes legitimate marketing activity and what should be outlawed.

Some online advertisers and song-swapping networks like Kazaa place programs on users' computers to monitor their activity, or harness their processors for other activities.

Other programs secretly track users' keystrokes to lift passwords and credit-card numbers, or sell "fixes" for software problems they create.

At least one state legislature has already passed an anti-spyware bill, prompting a business group to call for a national law to avoid conflicts.

"There should be a single federal standard that preempts existing state laws," said Robert Holleyman, president of the Business Software Alliance.

A bill sponsored by Sen. Conrad Burns would require companies to obtain permission before installing a piece of software on a consumer's computer, and provide an easy way for the consumer to remove the software if he wished.

"It's my computer, it's my private property," the Montana Republican said. "I bought it and paid for it for my use only, not some leech."

One purveyor of pop-up ads said his software was actually less intrusive than traditional advertising methods because it does not rely on databases that amass personal details about consumers.

Consumers know when WhenU.com Inc.'s pop-up software has been installed and can uninstall it easily - as 80 percent of those who downloaded it have done, said company president Avi Nader.

Burns seemed convinced by Nader's testimony, and said business groups would need to define unacceptable behavior to pinpoint the problem.

"Mr. Nader is in a legitimate business," Burns said.

#### U.N. Forum Debates Who Is in Charge of Internet

Who runs the Internet and how can it better serve the world? Everyone from the Internet's founders to advocacy groups met at the United Nations on Thursday to work on a new definition of governing the Internet.

While tech-savvy citizens of the developed world can send e-mail around the globe or buy digital music online, several governments in the developing world say the Internet has aggravated a "digital divide" where the world's poor remain unconnected to modern Internet and communication innovations.

"Already we can tell that there is an elephant in the room," Vinton Cerf,

a director of the International Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) said at a news briefing.

ICANN was chartered in 1998 by the U.S. government as a private nonprofit body to assign names and numbers to manage domain names.

"Some people suggest it is globalization. The other aspect of the elephant was that there were a lot of blind people trying to figure out what Internet governance is," said Cerf, a vice president of MCI. "So far, we've had many different views and no good definitions."

Internet use has exploded over the past decade, with an estimated 700 million and 1 billion users.

Many developing countries want governments to play a larger role in what appears on the Internet through the International Telecommunications Union, a United Nations agency.

But the world's richer nations want to preserve the status quo. Some in the private sector fear increased government involvement could slow innovation and lead to more red tape.

A U.N. task force was established last December to determine whether government officials should step in and set Internet policy in an effort to speed up the bridging of the technology gap.

At the two-day "Global Forum on Internet Governance" hosted by the United Nations, more than 200 representatives from government, the private sector and civil society debated issues such as regulation and transparency, and how to balance those with innovation in expanding the uses of the Internet.

Robert Kahn, a founder of the Internet who is CEO of the Corporation for National Research Initiatives, said: "It takes a while to realize that it's like the world economy, really. There's nobody who runs it (the Internet) but a collaborative effect of a lot of people."

Anriette Esterhuysen of the South Africa-based Association for Progressive Communications said discussing Internet governance at a global forum "is going to bring us a lot closer to a workable system."

The forum, which ends on Friday, will produce a report for the United Nations Information and Communication Technology Task Force. Their findings and recommendations will be presented at the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis in 2005.

### Clever Critter May Detect Hard-Drive Failures

Early detection is invaluable to prevent heart failure, and it may work for hard failure - as in hard drive - too, say Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) researchers.

They have designed a new heat-sensitive sensor to detect temperature variations that may signal an oncoming hard-drive disaster.

CMU is deploying the dime-sized "Critter Temperature Sensor" - which attaches to a user's desktop computer - to monitor the working environment of hard-charging hard drives across campus.

"Essentially, what we are trying to do is save the life of the computer hard drive," explained Michael Bigrigg, a project scientist at CMU's Institute for Complex Engineered Systems (ICES). "Hard drives get hot, and the sensor is designed to pick up the slightest temperature variation."

The average life span of a computer hard drive is 600,000 hours, or 3.1 years, said CMU spokesperson Chriss Swaney.

"But Carnegie Mellon researchers predict that they may be able to extend the life span of a computer hard drive and save users time and money by sensing how much daily heat a hard drive endures," Swaney told NewsFactor. "On average, it costs (US)\$80 to \$200 to repair a damaged hard drive, according to ICES."

Data storage has exploded in recent years; the CMU researchers offer a rough estimate of how much:

"The amount of new words, sounds and pictures stored on computer hard drives has almost doubled in the past three years," Bigrigg explained. "In global-climate data storage alone, researchers estimate that the volume of recorded information is expected to soar - from 2 billion gigabytes in the year 2000 to 15 billion gigabytes in 2010."

A gigabyte is a billion bytes - the equivalent of a billion English letters. Compare this amount to the average number of letters in a popular novel - one to five million - and it is no wonder hard drives sometimes buckle under their hefty load.

Guarding against hard-drive failures may take more than a clever critter however, said Texas A & M electrical engineering professor Laszlo Kish, an expert in semiconductor and electronic heat stress.

"The temperature of the hard drive may go up too high, but there are many types of hard-drive failures," Kish told NewsFactor. "This protection, which is to switch off the drive when it is too hot, would work only with one class of failures."

In addition to early hard-drive failure detection, the new sensor "will also help researchers understand wasted energy," Bigrigg told NewsFactor.

#### New DVD Burners Double Data Capacity

If you just bought a DVD-burning drive for your computer and think that for once you're current with the latest and greatest, it's disappointment time. Manufacturers are soon launching drives that can store double the amount of data on a disc.

Sony Electronics says it will be shipping drives in about two months that accept blank DVDs with two data layers. Philips Electronics will start selling a similar drive in Europe in April, but is not saying when it will be available in the United States.

The write-once discs can store up to 8.5 gigabytes of data, or about 4 hours of DVD-quality movies, twice the capacity of regular blank DVDs. This means capacities for computer-burned DVDs are catching up with prerecorded movie DVDs, many of which are already dual-layer.

The new technology is sure to appeal to those who back up or copy movie DVDs, since they often have to reduce image quality or remove special features to fit a copied movie onto a single-layer disc. With a dual-layer drive, an exact copy on a single disc should be possible.

(The software used to copy encrypted movie DVDs is illegal in the United States, according to recent court rulings.)

The two layers of the new discs are accessed from the same side - there is no need to flip the disc over to record to the second layer. Instead, a laser beam shines through the first layer to record on the second.

Sony will sell an internal drive for \$230 and an external one for \$330. They will be marketed only for Windows PCs, but the external one should work on Macintosh (news - web sites) computers with the proper third-party software.

Philips will sell two internal drives with somewhat different features, both for PCs. U.S. prices have not been set.

The drives will be able to burn regular write-once and rewritable DVDs and CDs as well.

The Sony and Philips drives will use somewhat different discs. Sony calls its variant DVD-R DL. The Philips equivalent is DVD+R DL. Both disc types should be readable in standard DVD drives and players.

Sony estimates the blank discs will cost \$5 to \$6. Philips does not have an estimate yet.

The dual-layer discs will be slower to burn than single-layer discs - the drives will be rated as burning at 2.4 times faster than playback speed, versus eight times for single-layer discs.

A full 8.5 gigabytes will take about 45 minutes to burn.

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